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ABSTRACT

The Water in Africa Project was realized over a 2-year period by a team of Peace Corps volunteers, World Wise Schools (WWS) classroom teachers, and WWS staff members. As part of an expanded, detailed design, resources were collected from over 90 volunteers serving in African countries, photos and stories were prepared, and standards-based learning units were created for K-12 students. In this unit, students reflect on the role of water in ceremonies and celebrations around the world. Peace Corps Volunteer vignettes provide the basis for researching and collecting data, which is organized into a class retrieval chart. As a culminating activity, students create learning stations and host a celebration of Water Day for younger students. The unit partners older elementary or middle school students with a class in grades 2-4. It can be used in language arts, social studies, reading, art, or foreign language classes and needs two weeks to complete. The unit lists materials needed, outlines applicable standards, poses discussion questions, and lists student objectives. It details day-by-day procedures for the teacher and suggests assessment and follow-up/enrichment activities. (BT)

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Water in Africa

Celebrating Our Connections through Water

http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/water/africa/lessons/

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Water in Africa is a project of Peace Corps World Wise Schools.

2000

Funded through a grant from the Department of Education, the Water in Africa project was realized over a two year period by a team of Peace Corps Volunteers, World Wise Schools' (WWS) classroom teachers, and WWS staff members. Inspired by an idea of one creative WWS teacher, the project eventually expanded into a detailed design. The development and implementation of the design included the collection of resources from over 90 Volunteers serving in African countries, the preparation of those photos and stories, and the creation of standards-based learning units for K-12 students.

Celebrating Our Connections through Water

Description:

In this unit, students will reflect on the role of water in ceremonies and celebrations around the world. Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) vignettes will provide the basis for researching and collecting data to be organized into a class retrieval chart. As a culminating activity, students will create learning stations and host a celebration of Water Day, leading younger students on a rotation of the stations.

Timeframe: Two weeks

Curricular Areas: Language arts, social studies, reading, art, foreign language

Grade Level: Grades 6-8 Includes partnering with a class in grades 2-4.

Materials

- World map
- Computer with Internet access
- Overhead projector
- Transparency Markers
- Overhead and printed copies for students of "Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart"
- "Completed Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart" (for teacher)
- Overhead and printed copies for students of "Peace Corps Volunteers Write About Songkran,"
- Overhead and printed copies for students of "Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers"
- "Evaluation of Product" assessment rubric
- Audio tape or CD of ocean sounds or rain showers (optional)
- I'm In Charge of Celebrations, by Byrd Baylor (optional)

Standards

Language Arts Standard 4- Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Benchmark-- Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways (e.g., time lines, outlines, notes, graphic representations)

Language Arts Standard 7- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts

Benchmark-- Applies reading skills and strategies to a variety of informational texts

Foreign Language Standard 4- Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of traditional ideas and perspectives, institutions, professions, literary and artistic expressions, and other components of target culture

Benchmark-- Knows cultural traditions and celebrations that exist in the target culture and how these traditions and celebrations compare with those of the native culture

Geography Standard 6- Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

Benchmark- Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of places and regions

Geography Standard 10- Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

Benchmark-- Knows ways in which communities reflect the cultural background of their inhabitants

Essential Questions

How does water play a part in celebrations around the world?

Why are these celebrations significant to the culture?

Why is water significant in my celebrations?

Objectives

Students will:

- Thematically synthesize world celebrations involving water into a retrieval chart
- Research the history and of these celebrations using the internet
- Reflect and write about a personal celebration involving water
- Create a learning station to show and share what they have learned

Procedure

Day One

1. Introduce the lesson by having students brainstorm examples of ceremonies or festivals in which water plays a role. It may be helpful to read aloud from I'm in Charge of Celebrations by Byrd Baylor to reinforce the idea that a celebration isn't only connected to holidays or festivals. A celebration can also be a special memory about a place, event or experience. Students may give examples such as baptisms, blessings, water balloon

fights at Fourth of July or family picnics, pool parties, etc. Record answers from students on the board.

2. After students have generated their own ideas about celebrating with water, tell them that they are going to be "H2O detectives" and investigate the ways in which water plays a key role in celebrations around the world. Distribute copies of the "Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart", reminding students that, in their search for data, it will be important to keep track of their findings. The retrieval chart will help them do this. Using an overhead of the retrieval chart and an overhead of the handout, "Peace Corps Volunteers Write About Songkran,"demonstrate how to alternate between the two to complete the retrieval chart. Tell students that they will know which anecdotes to research by matching the country and Peace Corps Volunteer's name from the chart to the country and Peace Corps Volunteer's name on the selected anecdotes and links.

3. Next, have the students find Thailand using a world map or atlas. Discuss the location of this area in terms of country, region, hemisphere, and continent. Have students write down the physical location on their retrieval chart and, using the overhead retrieval chart, point out the other categories that they will be researching. Reinforce that the information for these categories will come from actual first hand accounts written by Peace Corps Volunteers and related web sites.

4. Display the Songkran anecdotes on the overhead. Select either anecdote for the demonstration, reminding students that they will be researching vignettes similar to this one. Before reading the anecdote aloud, ask students to raise their hands when they hear something that addresses one of the categories on the retrieval chart. As students respond, underline or highlight areas of the text that answer the questions posed on the chart. Model how to transfer this data to the chart. If students will be importing data into the chart on a word document, emphasize the fact that, just as they are alternating between two overhead sheets, they will be alternating between two open files or sets of data. Complete all or some of the categories for this sample anecdote.

5. Explain to students that during the next class period, they will be alternating between anecdotes from the Web site and taking notes on their charts.

Day Two and Three

1. On days two and three, the class will be accessing information from the Peace Corps World Wise Schools Web site, www.peacecorps.gov/wws/views/celebrations/index.html. Options for the research process are: a.) Have students work in their classroom by taking notes on an 11"X14" copy of the retrieval chart from the "Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers"; or b.) Have students access the files listed in the materials section of this plan and use a word processing program to copy and paste pertinent information into the chart directly off of the electronic file of "Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers".

2. Review the process used on day one to gather research for the retrieval chart template.

Tell students that now they are going to conduct research themselves, using the information found on "Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers". Give them a copy of the evaluation rubric and explain that this rubric will be used on both the retrieval chart and on the final project that they will create as a result of completing their charts.

3. Assign partners to specialize on a specific country and have them research the related anecdotes and Web sites on this country. Allow partners extended time so that they can research all countries on the retrieval chart as completely as possible.

4. Allow students to work in partners completing the research charts. Assist as needed. This may take two to three class periods or longer, particularly if students are going to be conducting Internet research.

5. Before the class ends, allow students to share their successes and/or problems with their research. Ask students for tips on what made them most successful as partners, and what behaviors or frustrations got in their way. Offer your observations as to what was working well. Based on your observations, end with a tip for students for the next research session.

Day Four and Five

1. Set aside time to continue with the research process and sharing of findings. If time allows, have partners continue to research each country until the majority of students have completed their retrieval charts.

2. Teacher options for processing research efforts at this time are: a.) Have country groups present their specialized findings to the class so that all may complete the chart from a group research effort; or b.) Group partners together to compare and refine results of their research effort.

3. Process as a class by synthesizing results into a large bulletin board retrieval chart.

Day Six

1. On the final day of data collection, have students take out their retrieval charts and refer to the class chart. Tell students they will be reviewing what they have learned about the special role water plays in festivities and holidays around the world the role according to theme. Afterwards, they will revisit their earlier notes on the role of water in their own lives.

2. Create a "Role of Water Themes" web on the board and ask students to consider the role of water in the holidays and festivals they explored. For example

    - To Celebrate: "Bless others" with a good dousing (Songkran: Thailand)
    - To Conserve: As in competition where girls try to balance bottle of water on head

without spilling contents (Independence Day: Africa).

- To Test one's will power to go without water which may also be viewed as conserving water (Puasa: Malaysia).
- To Cleanse: As in washing away one's troubles (Loi Krathong: Thailand) and carry away one's sins (John's Day: Lithuania)

3. Have students reflect back on their brainstorming session of celebrations, holidays, or special occasions in which water plays an important ceremonial or festive role. Ask students to bring this event to life in a free writing exercise that includes descriptions of sights, sounds, smells, setting, expressions and actions of those around them, as the PCVs did in their vignettes.

4. Ask students to respond to the prompt "I will always remember the special role water has played in...." Some questions that may help students generate ideas might include:

   How is the thematic role of water in my personal anecdote similar to or different from the role of water described in one of the PCV anecdotes? What is the background or story behind this experience and how is it significant to my culture, custom, tradition, or life? You may even wish to put on a soothing CD of ocean sounds or rain showers to set the atmosphere.

5. Allow students time to share with the class if they wish.

Day Seven Until Complete

Assessment

Compare class retrieval chart and/or individual student retrieval charts to completed retrieval chart sample. Assess for accuracy and completeness.

Now that students have gathered a solid base of information on world celebrations of water and have made personal connections to it, they can celebrate their efforts by sharing with others. Students will host a Celebrations of Water Day where groups of three to four students will lead younger students through a rotation of learning stations. The purpose of these stations is to allow students to creatively teach younger students and to bring world celebrations of water to life.

Teachers may wish to assign groups to learning stations or allow groups to select the type of station they would like to create. The learning stations should include evidence of understanding from each category researched. They should be visually appealing with attention to detail and they should be carefully drawn, neatly printed, accurately worded, and correctly spelled as some of these materials will be left with the younger children, many of whom may be learning to read. Remind students of the evaluation rubric that will be used to assess their learning. If necessary, provide students with copies and discuss it.

Some suggestions for learning stations are as follows:

Picture Book Station

Create a picture book that includes an illustration of each celebration or festival on one side with a paragraph summarizing the retrieval chart information and a map showing the location of the country on the other side. The illustrations should be carefully colored for the picture book. Text should be in large print for young children to read. Practice reading the book with expression. Read the book to children and leave with the class as a gift.

Coloring Book or Pages

Create bold line drawings that capture the main activities in the celebrations portrayed. Include a title with country name and name of event such as "Songkran Festival in Thailand." Print a neat caption below each picture that describes what is happening in the picture. Refer to real coloring books for ideas on how to simplify drawings for coloring purposes.

Poster or Travel Brochure Station

sually represent a country's celebration of water in a travel brochure or poster format. Captions should be included for each picture and category. Practice using the brochures or posters as teaching tools.

Crafts Station

Design a craft that younger students can make as a memento of each of the country's water celebrations. For example, a wreath for Lithuania's St. John's Day and miniature rafts to float away worries for Thailand's Loi Krathong.

Role Play Station

Develop ways to allow young students to respectfully reenact some of the celebrations without necessarily getting soaked. For example, have students practice balancing buckets partially full of water on their heads for Africa's Independence Day. Have a model of a Buddha where students splash its feet and sprinkle baby powder or tapioca pudding on it for Thailand's Songkran Festival.

Follow-up/Enrichment Activities

Older students may wish to partner up with their younger peers and share their own personal anecdotes on the role of water in one of their life events. Students may then interview their peers and help them write and illustrate a time when water played a special role in their lives.

Of course, it would be great fun on a hot summer day to end this unit in a structured outdoor activity with water play!

Additional Resources

Celebrations in Various Countries as found on Peace Corps' World Wise Schools web site

http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/views/celebrations/index.html

Related Web Sites For Additional Research On Holidays Featured In Anecdotes:

Americas And The Carribean

Easter Weeks In Mexico
http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/feature/easterindex.html

Asia

The Songkran Festival:
http://www.lotusfragrance.com/
http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/special_event/songkran/index.html

Europe

Lithuania Holidays:
http://javlb.org/folklife/calendar.html

Pacific

Malaysia Festival:
http://www.regit.com/malaysia/festival/haripuas.htm
http://www.visitmalaysia.com/holhariraya.html

About the Author

Michelle Abernathy-Tabor is a sixth grade teacher at Fairhaven Middle School in Bellingham, Washington. She reflects on her class' response to this unit:

We had great fun recording our findings in a large, bulletin board size chart. Students loved being teacher and using markers to record. This seemed to work better than having students fill in a template chart on a word processing document. I abandoned this idea and went directly to large butcher paper that we just transported back and forth from the lab to the classroom.

Students enjoyed the unit and seemed to catch on well to the idea of the different ways we view and value water in culture. I think that having the retrieval chart continually visible helped students be more reflective--all of our findings were out in the open to ponder. We are looking forward to our own celebratory outdoor water festival when the weather permits.

Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart

Name and Location of Volunteers	Festivity and Date	Description	Significance of Water	Similar Customs or Festivities
Africa Gomare, Botswana Barbara Davis				
Africa Tazarte, Morocco Erica Clark				
South America Azogues, Ecuador Stephen Church				
Central America Paris de Parit, Panama. Judy D' Amore				
Pacific Kota Tinggi, Johor, Malaysia Barbara Sallettes				

Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart

Name and Location of Volunteers	Festivity and Date	Description	Significance of Water	Similar Customs or Festivities
Asia Nakorn Ratchasima, (Korat), Thailand PCV: Rex Dufour Pathiu in Chumphon province, Thailand, Leslie Wilson Tungfun district in Udorn province, Thailand Judith Painter				
Europe Hrazdan, Armenia Rich Bartell				
Europe Marijampole, Lithuania Lisa Burrowes				

Completed Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart

Name and Location of Volunteers	Festivity and Date	Description	Significance of Water	Similar Customs or Festivities
Africa Gomare, Botswana Barbara Davis	**Independence Day** September 30	Celebration honoring local dignitaries, chief, and district council	Competitions such as girls balancing bottle of water on head	Local parades recognizing service of leaders (firefighters, mayors)
Africa Tazarte, Morocco Erica Clark	**Ashora**	Children ask for pennies or douse you with water	Water dousing	Halloween: a "trick-or-treat"
South America Azogues, Ecuador Stephen Church	**Semana Santa Carnival** Holy Week – Palm Sunday to Easter Saturday	Semana Santa celebrates the religious aspects of the last days of the Christ's life. (In Mexico this may be reenacted.) Everyone is fair game for getting soaked. Culminates in a large, traditional family meal	Water fights: a general baptism of all turned playful	Vartevor Thanksgiving
Central America Parıs de Parit, Panama. Judy D' Amore	**Fat Tuesday (Carnivales),** February Week leading up to Easter	Coronation of queen, formal presentation of queen and important members of community, parades, spraying of water on each other, dancing, and live music	Water fights: an overall baptism of sorts turned playful	Vartevor
Pacific Kota Tinggi, Johor, Malaysia Barbara Sallettes	**Puasa:** Month of Ramadan	Puasa is an Islamic pratice where no food or drink is taken during daylight hours for one month, Ramadan. Hari Raya Puasa signifies the end of the fasting season.	Abstaining from water during these warm days shows ones ability to sacrifice and endure.	Lent

Completed Water Celebrations Retrieval Chart

Name and Location of Volunteers	Festivity and Date	Description	Significance of Water	Similar Customs or Festivities
Asia Nakorn Ratchasima, (Korat), Thailand PCV: Rex Dufour	**Songkran**, April 13 Lasting 1-5 days during hottest part of year. Songkran is a Thai word meaning "to move" or "change place". It is the day when the sun changes its position in the zodiac.	People perform a bathing rite for Buddha images and monks. Songkran is a Water Festival where everyone is soaked and often topped with baby powder and tapioca. In Northern Thailand, it is said that people used to soak a caged cat to bring on the monsoon rains.	People believe that water will wash away bad luck. Family members pour scented water on hands of elders to show respect.	Rain Dance of Native Americans; Baptisms; Christenings
Pathiu in Chumphon province, Thailand, Leslie Wilson				
Tungfun district in Udorn province, Thailand Judith Painter	**Loi Krathong** mid-April	Cares, worries, bad karma, etc., are symbolically floated away on a small candle-lit raft (or Krathong) set on the closest body of water	Water carries or washes away troubles and bad deeds; water cleanses	Baptisms. Also similar to Jewish holiday following Yom Kippur where bread is cast into water as a way of casting off sins of past.
Europe Hrazdan, Armenia Rich Bartell	**Vartevor** **"Rose Day"** July on a Sunday	Stems from an old pagan celebration. People playfully douse each other, busses, and automobiles with water; especially enjoyed by children.	Water is used in a playful, prankish way during a hot time of the year.	Halloween Semana Santa Ashora
Europe Marijampole, Lithuania Lisa Burrowes	**Jonines** **"The Feast of St. John's Day"** Merry-making actually begins the night of June 23, the longest night of the year, preceeding St. John's Day, June 24.	Folk tradition celebration of nature forces on the longest day of the year. People dress in national costumes, young maidens send flower wreaths downstream; a burning wheel is erected on a hill; other look in the forest for the mythical fern which blooms only mid-summer eve; many drink and sing all night.	Water predicts future; carries hopes and dreams of young girls. The farther a wreath floats, the sooner a girl will marry. If a wreath gets stuck, it does not mean she won't marry. Washing your face in the morning dew makes the young more beautiful and the old more youthful.	Solstice

Peace Corps Volunteers Write About Songkran

With Related Internet Links

Volunteer: Rex Dufour	**Country of Service:** Thailand	**Years of Service:** 1985-1987
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Nakorn Ratchasima (also known as Korat). I lived about five km outside of Korat in Development Village.		

The Thai New Year, known as Songkran, on April 13, was always a big celebration. Depending on the locality in Thailand, it may be celebrated for 1-5 days. A lot of folks from Bangkok head up to Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, to celebrate Songkran. Songkran occurs during the hottest part of the year and some have called it a national water fight. A lot of the celebration involves pouring (or splashing) water on anyone and everyone you meet. There's also quite a bit of baby powder smeared on people's faces--not sure where that tradition came from. The more polite (rip-roy) way of doing Songkran is to ask the pardon of someone prior to gently pouring a small amount of water on his or her shoulder. I've only seen this done at official ceremonies, however. Most of the celebration is much more rowdy. In the northeast (Esan) of Thailand, the villagers, I'm told, used to place a cat in a cage and splash it with water. This was done in order to attract the monsoon rains (perhaps attracted to the cat's yowling?). I never personally saw this activity, but I did participate in many Songkrans. One year I invited several other Volunteers to Korat for Songkran. We borrowed a pick-up truck and a 50-gallon drum along with some very large blocks of ice and drove around Korat cooling people off. There's nothing quite like being splashed with ice water on a 100 degree day. It was great fun for both splashers and splashees and we farong (foreigners) attracted our share of water and powder, and even some tapioca.

Related URL:
The Songkran Festival: http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/special_event/songkran/index.html

Volunteer: Leslie Wilson	**Country of Service:** Thailand	**Years of Service:** 1990-1992
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Pathiu (village), Chumphon (province). It was an 8-hour train ride south of Bangkok.		

One celebration in Thailand was Songkran, the traditional Thai water festival that occurs in the middle of April each year. It's sort of like Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year all rolled into one BIG, BIG holiday. You will, I hope, get lots of details about the history and practice of the holiday which, among other things, involved the "blessing" of others with water. Or, at least that's how it started out in ancient times -- water poured respectfully and delicately over the wrists of those you wanted to honor. Now teenagers cruise around with 50 gallon drums of water loaded in the back of pick-up trucks and drench passersby with buckets of water. Or, they just hook up a rubber hose to the household faucet and spray people who walk past their houses. All in good fun, of course, but a bit more than the tradition called for, I'm sure.

Related URL:The Songkran Festival
http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/special_event/songkran/index.html

Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers

With Related Internet Links

Africa

Volunteer: Barbara Davis	**Country of Service:** Botswana	**Years of Service:** 1984-1990
Place and location: Gomare, where I did the majority of my service was 1,500 km northwest of the capital Gaborone		

Independence Day (September 30) is similar to small town celebrations in the United States, centered around the local dignitaries, the chief, the other district council members. They are unique in so far as beasts are slaughtered and a huge feast is prepared for everyone in the village. I guess that's like a huge country fair or pot luck, but the village people do not bring anything; they are fed by the district council. School children have traditional dance competitions, and at our school (the junior high school) we had several sports competitions such as a foot race run by girls who were balancing a bottle of water on their heads. They had to do a 50-meter dash without touching the bottle with their hands, and without spilling the bottle. We also had a Miss Independence competition, which included not only the usual poise and grace type stuff, but questions concerning the history of Botswana. The young woman who won the competition in '86 (the 20th anniversary of independence) was also the heaviest girl in the school. Schoolchildren in the USA find it hard to believe that a heavy girl would win a beauty competition.

Volunteer: Erica Clark	**Country of Service:** Morocco	**Years of Service:** 1996-1998
Place and location: I am serving in Tazarte (Fig), which is 60 km northeast of Marrakech in the mountains and plains.		

On Ashora, children go from house to house asking for 10 centimes pieces (like a penny). If you don't give them one, they can throw water on you, or use a squirt gun, etc. Usually mass water fights break out in the streets between everybody, adults and children alike. It is similar to Halloween in the "trick or treat" spirit of things. A super soaker water gun is our ultimate wish for the day -or a giant hose! It is a simultaneous water fight throughout all of Morocco.

Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers

With Related Internet Links

Americas and The Carribean

Volunteer: Stephen Church	**Country of Service:** Ecuador	**Years of Service:** 1996-1998
Place and location: I am a Volunteer in Azogues which is in southern central Ecuador, about 40 km northeast of the city of Cuenca.		

Here in Ecuador, the celebration that stands out most in my mind is that of **Carnaval**. When I first heard it mentioned by Ecuadorians and fellow Volunteers, images of loud music, festive parades and people celebrating throughout the night filled my mind. As I pressed for more details, both Ecuadorians and veteran Volunteers responded with an evil grin, pausing to savor the memories of Carnavals past, muttering something to the effect of "Just wait. You'll find out soon enough."

Samba isn't quite as popular in Ecuador as it is in Brazil, and Quito isn't quite Río de Janeiro, but does that mean they can't celebrate Carnaval in Ecuador like they do in Brazil? After all, both countries are in South America and both have a celebration called Carnaval before Easter. Isn't it logical for inexperienced Volunteers and travelers to assume that it would be celebrated the same way? Well, surprise, it's not.

Throughout the country, from the hot and humid coastal lowlands to the cool and dry Andes highlands and down into the wet Amazon basin, Ecuadorians celebrate **Semana Santa**, the week leading up to Easter, by dousing each other with water, and among friends, anything else that happens to be handy. Walking down the street, you become fair play for children and teenagers hiding in doorways and waiting on balconies with buckets, balloons, local versions of the famous Super Soaker, and anything else that will hold water long enough for them to take aim and let fly. Traditionally, Carnaval is only celebrated the three days before Easter, but each year it seems to start a day earlier. The beginning of the week is more tranquilo with things getting more intense and less dry as the week progresses.

On the street, there are some unwritten guidelines that most Carnavaleros adhere to. For example, the elderly and those in business or other formal attire are usually ignored, but there are always exceptions. Also, those who find themselves on the receiving end of things are supposed to laugh it off and continue on to their destination dripping all the way. Once wet, they will generally be avoided as target, at least until they start to dry off again. After all, who wants to soak someone who is already wet when there are plenty of dry or almost dry people wandering around?

Friends often get together to celebrate Carnaval with a picnic or a barbecue, listening to music, hanging out, and having fun before people start to get wet. Water, of course, is the favorite weapon of choice, but eventually it runs out. Whatever else happens to be handy, liquid or otherwise, is often poured, thrown or dumped on whomever happens to be nearest. Some common additions are flour, cornstarch, and eggs among others.

Another important part of Carnaval is the food. At home, after the water stops flying and everyone has toweled off, it's time for the traditional meal. The meal begins with a serving of motepata. **Motepata is a soup made with mote, a stewed corn similar to hominy, other grains, patas(pigs feet), and other cuts of pork**. In some homes, the traditional pata is left out in favor of more bacon and pork. The main entree of cuy follows the motepata served on a bed of rice. Cuy is an Andean delicacy dating back to pre-Columbian times more commonly known in English as guinea pig. Most prefer their guinea pig barbecued, but roasted or baked guinea pig is also common. Dessert comes last consisting of dulce de higo, or candied figs, in a sweet sauce.

After the big meal I had a feeling similar to the one I get after a big Thanksgiving meal in the States. All I wanted to do was relax and watch some football. Of course in Ecuador I would be watching fútbol (soccer) instead of football, but what better way to end my Ecuadorian Carnaval!"

Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers

With Related Internet Links

Volunteer: Judy D' Amore	**Country of Service:** Panama	**Years of Service:** 1996-1998
Place and location: I am serving as a Volunteer in Paris de Parit about 25 miles north of the city of Chitré, on the eastern edge of the Azuero Peninsula.		

There are so many celebrations here, from the anniversary of the school, or the patron saint of the town, to the huge number of national festivals and holidays, day of the flag, day of the Patria, childrens' day, student's day, mother's day. . . and of course, **Carnavales, (Fat Tuesday)** in February.

Carnavales are celebrated most exuberantly in the city of Las Tablas, to the south of us, but it was also celebrated within my small community. There was coronation of the queen, parades and formal presentation of the queen and important members of the community. The queen and her attendants are dressed in elaborate, expensive, embroidered dresses reminiscent of Spain. Another characteristic part of Carnavales festivities here is the spraying of water on each other from every available hose and faucet, and there are even trucks with water tanks on the back for dumping on people. Nobody leaves their houses during Carnavales unless they're dressed to get very wet. It's the only time here where you see people scantily dressed, with flashy sunglasses and silly hats. Dancing goes on 24 hours a day, during the day in wet, open-air dance halls, the dancers getting sprayed as they dance. At night the hoses are put away and people dress up. The music might be discotheque, or live bands playing musica tipica, immensely popular local bands starring accordion players, drum and guitar. There's also a wonderful traditional music in this part of Panama based on small, hand-made wooden drums. The energetic drumming is accompanied by a women's song, led by a lead singer and answered by a chorus. A man and woman dance within the circle of singers and drummers, but the individuals change rapidly, a second man replacing the one who's dancing and the woman stepping out to let a new woman in.

I think the most striking part of Carnavales and indeed of all festivals here is that they are celebrated so universally by all members of the community and equally by all ages. These are all very much family events.

Related Internet Link
Easter Weeks in Mexico/Pascua/Semana Santa:
http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/feature/easterindex.html

The Pacific

Volunteer: Barbara Sallettes	**Country of Service:** Malaysia	**Years of Service:** 1964-1966
Place and location: I served in Kota Tinggi, Johor, which is 26 miles from Johor Bahru, Johor (Johor Bahru is the capital of the state of Johor.)		

Although there are other religions, the **predominant religion of Malaysia is Islam**. Over there, the **month of Ramadan** is called **Puasa**. The first year I was in Malaysia, I decided to observe Puasa to get a feel of what the people were experiencing. During daylight hours, you cannot eat or drink anything. Not eating wasn't too difficult, but going without anything to drink was another story. Malaysia has an extremely warm climate and by the afternoon my mouth felt like cotton. Observing Puasa was difficult. I certainly gained a sense of understanding and respect for those who follow this Islamic practice.

Related Internet Links
Festival of Malaysia - Hari Raya Puasa: http://www.regit.com/malaysia/festival/haripuas.htm
Malaysia/Festivals: http://www.visitmalaysia.com/holhariraya.html

Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers

With Related Internet Links

Asia

Volunteer: Rex Dufour	**Country of Service:** Thailand	**Years of Service:** 1985-1987
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Nakorn Ratchasima (also known as Korat). I lived about five km outside of Korat in Development Village.		

The Thai New Year, known as **Songkran**, on April 13, was always a big celebration. Depending on the locality in Thailand, it may be celebrated for 1-5 days. A lot of folks from Bangkok head up to Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, to celebrate Songkran.

Songkran occurs during the hottest part of the year and some have called it a national water fight. A lot of the celebration involves pouring (or splashing) water on anyone and everyone you meet. There's also quite a bit of baby powder smeared on people's faces--not sure where that tradition came from. The more polite (rip-roy) way of doing Songkran is to ask the pardon of someone prior to gently pouring a small amount of water on their shoulder. I've only seen this done at official ceremonies, however. Most of the celebration is much more rowdy. In the northeast (Esan) of Thailand, the villagers, I'm told, used to place a cat in a cage and splash it with water. This was done in order to attract the monsoon rains (perhaps attracted to the cat's yowling??). I never personally saw this activity, but I did participate in many songkrans. One year I invited several other Volunteers to Korat for Songkran. We borrowed a pick-up truck and a 50-gallon drum along with some very large blocks of ice and drove around Korat cooling people off. There's nothing quite like being splashed with ice water on a 100 degree day. It was great fun for both splashers and splashees and we farong (foreigners) attracted our share of water and powder, and even some tapioca.

Volunteer: Leslie Wilson	**Country of Service:** Thailand	**Years of Service:** 1990 - 1992
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Pathiu (village), Chumphon (province).. It was an 8-hour train ride south of Bangkok.		

One celebration in **Thailand** was **Songkran**, the traditional Thai water festival that occurs in the middle of April each year. It's sort of like Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Years all rolled into one BIG, BIG holiday. You will, I hope, get lots of details about the history and practice of the holiday which, among other things, involved the "blessing" of others with water. Or, at least that's how it started out in ancient times -- water poured respectfully and delicately over the wrists of those you wanted to honor. Now, teenagers cruise around with 50 gallon drums of water loaded in the back of pick-up trucks and drench passersby with buckets of water. Or, they just hook up a rubber hose to the household faucet and spray people who walk past their houses. All in good fun, of course, but a bit more than the tradition called for, I'm sure.

Related Internet Link:The Songkran Festival
http://sunsite.au.ac.th/thailand/special_event/songkran/index.html

Volunteer: Judith Painter	**Country of Service:** Thailand	**Years of Service:** 1982-1984
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in the Tungfun district, in Udorn province. This small sub-district is 70 km east of the provincial capital Udorn Thani in the northeast section of Thailand.		

Loi Kratong is a celebration in Thailand when people float small boats decorated with flowers, candles and candy. This symbolizes sending off your sins from last year. It is similar to a Jewish holiday following Yom Kippur where bread is cast into the water as a way of casting off sins.

Selected Anecdotes from Peace Corps Volunteers

With Related Internet Links

Europe

Volunteer: Lisa Burrowes	**Country of Service:** Lithuania	**Years of Service:** 1994-1996
Place and location: I was a Volunteer in Marijampole which is south west of the capital (Vilnius)--it's about a 1.5 hour drive by car and three hours by bus or train.		

Lithuanians love to celebrate! And there are many days of celebration; but I think that quite possibly their favorite holiday is celebrated on June 24th every year. It is the longest day of the year...and in Lithuania, it never really gets completely dark on this day (the sun is always low on the horizon). The holiday is called **Jonines (YO nin ness), or "John's Day"**. Most people go to the forest and drink and sing and dance all night long. There is one tradition where all the young maidens send wreaths down a creek in a race. Whoever's wreath gets stuck on twigs or sinks or comes in last is said to be a senmerge (SAN mare gay) or spinster! Usually, there is traditional folk dancing and singing accompanying this holiday. This holiday is different than any I've celebrated in the United States because Lithuanians love folk tradition, including the young children and teenagers. They love to dress in their national costumes. They are a proud people and they never forget their ancestry.

Volunteer: Rich Bartell	**Country of Service:** Armenia	**Years of Service:** 1996-1998
Place and location: I am a Volunteer in Hrazdan which is about 50 km northeast of Armenias capital, Yerevan.		

While I am not sure what is being celebrated, my favorite holiday in Armenia is Vartevor. A literal translation of **Vartevor is "Rose Day".** Like Easter, the exact date of Vartevor varies from year to year, but it is always on a Sunday in the month of July. I am told that the holiday stems from an old pagan celebration of some sort, as does the American Halloween. And like Halloween, Vartevor is a holiday enjoyed most by children--and, of course, by us child-like adults.

The celebration of Vartevor involves water, and people dousing one another with it. As I strolled through the streets of Yerevan on Vartevor, I saw hundreds of people, primarily but not exclusively children, throwing water at one another. It came by the cup full and the bucket full. It came out of squirt guns and in balloons. It was administered by frontal assaults and from upper story windows. It was directed at pedestrians, private automobiles, and public buses. But it was always delivered with a smile. As a foreigner (which even the smallest of children can somehow immediately discern) and as an adult unknown to the assailants, I initially proved immune to the direct assaults. At one point a group of boys approached me tentatively, their buckets overflowing and poised for attack. I asked them to wait and removed my camera from its protective plastic bag to take their photograph. They were happy to comply and posed for me, grinning and with buckets ready. After I stowed the camera I expected to be doused, but to my disappointment the children moved on without attacking.

When I reached Republic Square in the center of Yerevan, my immunity at last came to an end. Apparently anyone willing to come that close to the large fountains with their endless supply of liquid ammunition was fair game, foreigner or not. After the initial daring attack, the simple fact that I was already wet seemed to remove any inhibitions the children had, and for the rest of the afternoon we exchanged dousings over and over again. It was not only fun, but proved a welcome relief from the sweltering heat of summer in Yerevan. And I will never forget the smiles.

Related Internet Links:
Calendar Celebrations in Lithuania: http://javlb.org/folklife/calendar.html
Lithuanian Holidays and Festivals: http://www.angelfire.com/ut/Luthuanian/holidays.html

Celebrating Connections Through Water

Evaluation of Products

Student Name_____

Product:_____

Area	Points	Descriptors
Content Accuracy	/	The student: • Displays accurate information about celebrations on the water celebrations retrieval chart • Demonstrates an thorough understanding of the similarity of celebrations with water
Content Depth	/	The student: • Compares the meanings of cultural celebrations as well as the behaviors with water • Makes connections by identifying similar festivals and by creating a personal narrative
Process	/	The student: • Completed research and read information thoroughly • Included information from Volunteer anecdotes and from other Internet sites • Addressed celebrations from other cultures appropriately in the learning station
Presentation and Neatness	/	The student: • Creates an attractive learning station which is eye-catching and aesthetically pleasing • Includes a personal anecdote that is legible and free of mechanical errors.
Creativity	/	The student: • Displays an interesting and unique approach in developing the learning station.
Total	/	

Comments: